America's Assassins:

11/25/75

By Sander Vanocur

There will be some compelling and disturbing television on CBS tonight and Wednesday night. You owe it to yourself to watch it.

The programs, airing from 10 to 11 p.m., are the first in a series called "The American Assassins" that will examine the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the attempted assassination of George C. Wallace.

CBS Reports, which has produced the series, calls it an "inquiry." Judging from the first two programs, which are called "Lee Harvey Oswald and John F. Kennedy," that is an appropriate working title. The programs are painstaking, unemotional and professional journalistic efforts, designed to aid the American people in understanding why the assassinations have become a political controversy that threatens to grow in magnitude and intensity.

There is a temptation in previewing television programs to tell everything that is in them, and that will be partially resisted in this instance. Much of the material in "The American Assassins" is public knowledge. Some of it, particularly the man who admits at the end of the first program that Lee Harvey Oswald and a "Latin" man came to see him several weeks before the John F.

Preview

Kennedy assassination to buy four powerful automatic rifles, has not been well-publicized. Seeing and hearing it on television is disturbing.

That admission does not detract from the impact these programs will have on public opinion. What makes these programs distinctive and what will probably give them important political impact is that millions of Americans sitting in their living rooms will see in visual terms material which a much smaller number of people in this country

A Painstaking Inquiry

either have read or have heard in lecture halls on college campuses.

Then there is the matter of timing. These programs come at the end of several years in which the American people have been subjected to an unrelenting succession of revelations of sordidness in high places. Though by nature we do seem to be a people given to viewing history in conspiratorial terms, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold on to simplistic explanations of assassinations. That is evidenced by the poll CBS News commissioned in October that showed 46 per cent of the persons polled believed there is some connections between the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and King and the attempt on Wallace.

There is also the question of the young in this country and the assassinations. Everyone who was an adult when these tragic events took place will understand his or her emotions. But try to remember what impact it had on your children. What did they feel? What did they say? Did they know or even care about the explanations handed down at the time?

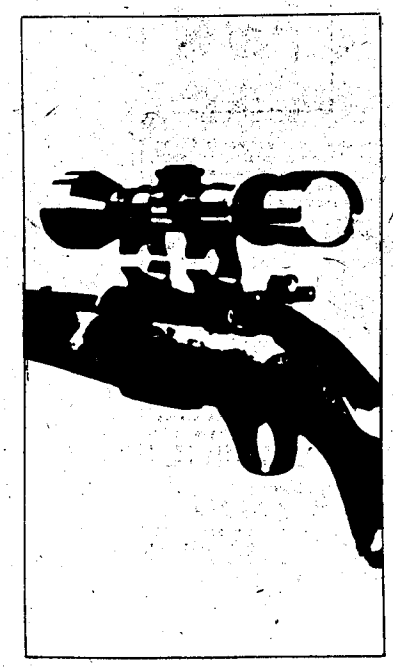
They care now. They pack college halls to hear speakers such as Mark Lane. Why shouldn't they? The experience of the past 12 years has been one of assassinations and revealed conspiracies; they come to it readily.

These programs do not, however, reach the conclusion that there was a conspiracy. But they do raise disturbing questions about Oswald and what the CIA and the FBI did not tell the Warren Commission, and why they did not.

Yet it is precisely because the programs have been so carefully and painstakingly produced that the questions raised seem so frightening. Accusations are one thing. Exhaustive journalism, visually presented, is another. The impact is enormous.

These programs also demonstrate what can happen when a news organization decides to commit a great

See ASSASSINS, B6, Col. 5



A Painstaking Inquiry

ASSASSINS, From B1

deal of time and a great deal of money to examine an importatnt subject. CBS News did it in 1967, when it devoted four one-hour reports to examine the findings of the Warren Commission, and it has done it again, both with these two programs and the others coming later in the series.

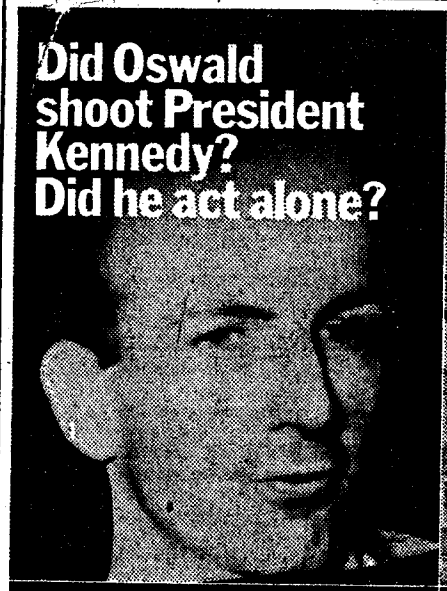
Some kudos are in order. They go to reporter Dan Rather, to Executive Producer Leslie Midgley, who, with Rather., wrote the script, and to producer Bernard Birnbaum. Together they have raised a standard which other news organizations can envy and hopefully emulate.

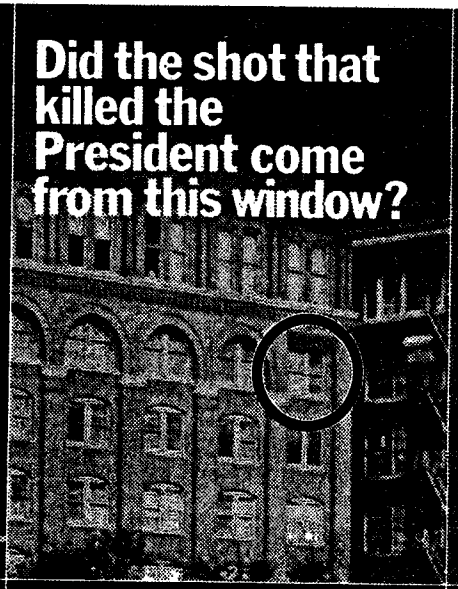
The Zapruder film, which shows Kennedy being shot, is used in tonight's program. You may not want young children to see it.

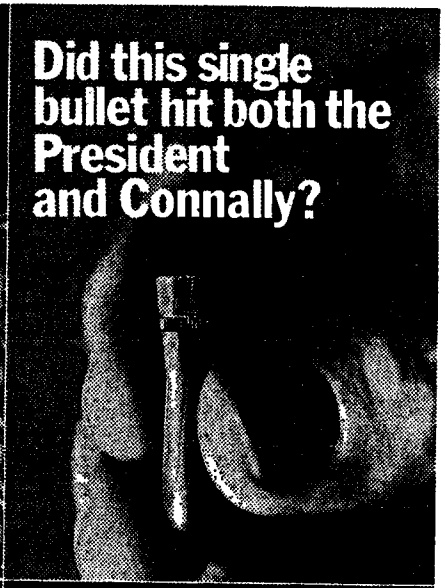
Evangelist Graham Ill

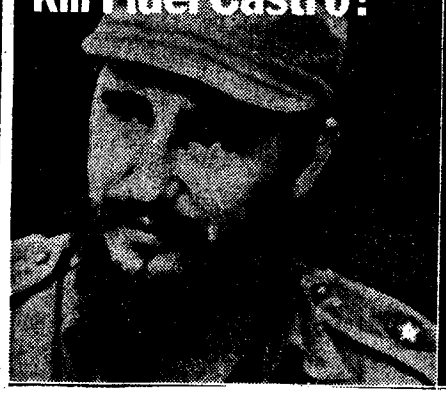
ATHENS–Evangelist Billy Graham has a serious intestinal infection and may have to abandon his world tour, according to a spokesman.

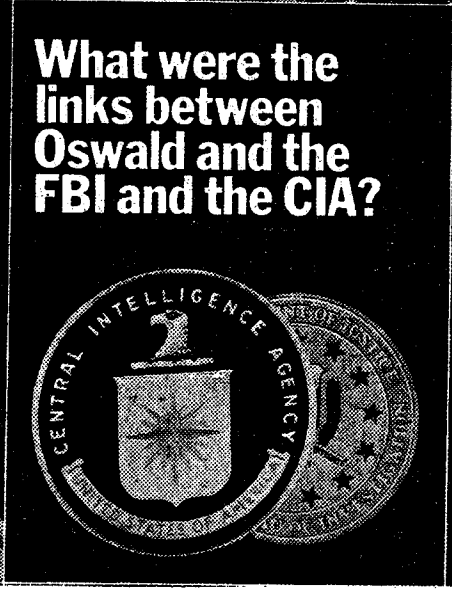
The Rev. Walter Smyth of the Billy Graham Evangelist Association said Graham was "under treatment involving heavy doses of antibiotics and some sedation because of fever, stomach cramps and exhaustion."

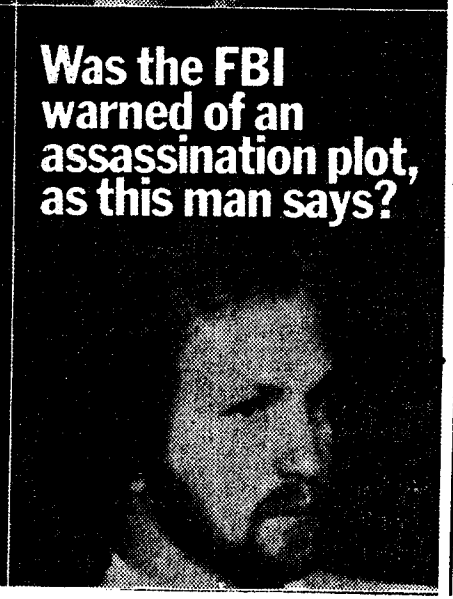

Did Oswald shoot President Kennedy? Did he act alone?

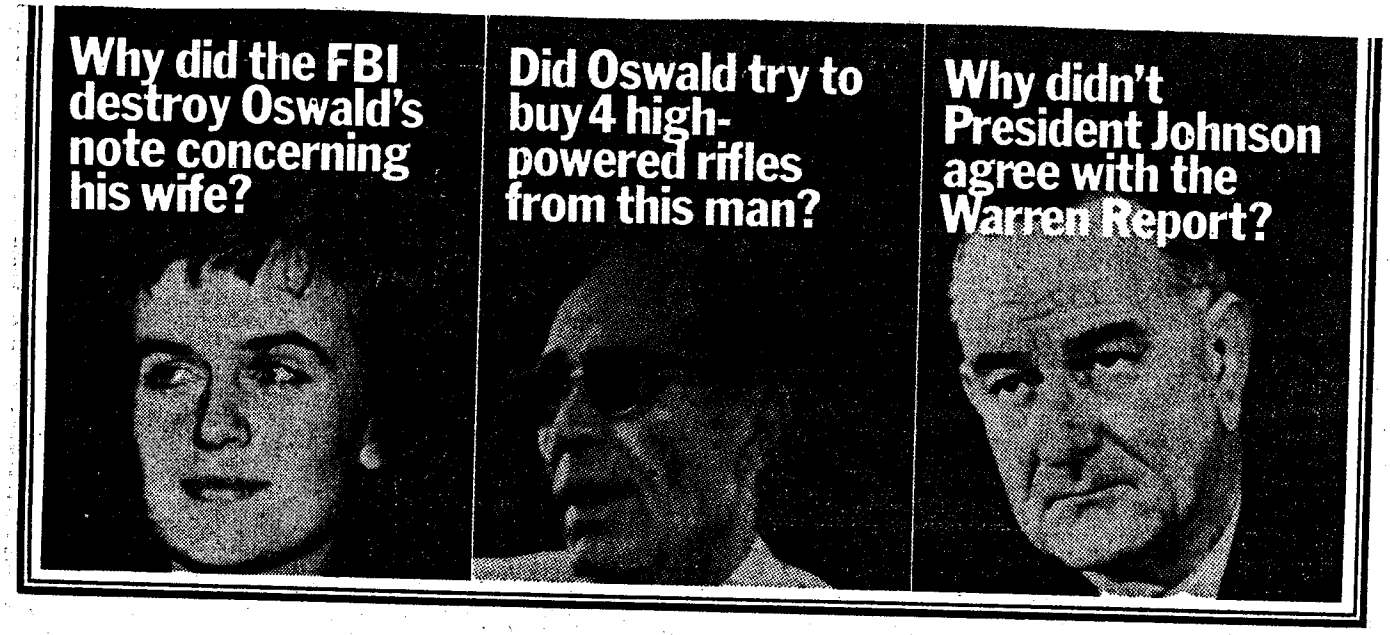

Did the shot that killed the President come from this window?


Did this single bullet hit both the President and Connally?


Was Kennedy killed because of CIA attempts to kill Fidel Castro?


What were the links between Oswald and the FBI and the CIA?
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY


Was the FBI warned of an assassination plot, as this man says?



Twelve years after the fact, these and other questions surrounding the murder of John F. Kennedy remain unresolved. Starting tonight, CBS News Correspondent Dan Rather delves into this ever-deepening mystery, including recent surprising developments. And comes to some definite conclusion based on the weight of evidence.

A CBS REPORTS INQUIRY

THE AMERICAN ASSASSINS

TONIGHT AND TOMORROW NIGHT AT 10 CBS NEWS 9

Subsequent broadcasts, on dates to be announced, will deal with the shootings of Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and George Wallace.